



JUST TRANSITION PRINCIPLES



June 2026

Introduction

The Fairmiles Just Transition Principles provide a practical framework to help organisations make better supply chain decisions. They are intended for organisations making sourcing, procurement, investment, climate or sustainability decisions that could affect people, communities, businesses or the environment. For example, they can be applied when changing suppliers or sourcing locations, introducing new environmental requirements, responding to new regulations, or setting climate and sustainability strategies.

The principles encourage decision-makers to consider risks and opportunities, assess impacts, gather and use evidence responsibly, ensure responses are proportionate, and manage change fairly. Together, they help organisations pursue sustainability objectives while reducing the risk of unintended consequences, supporting more resilient and equitable supply chains, and delivering better outcomes for people and the environment.

About Fairmiles

Fairmiles is a collaborative initiative bringing together businesses, supply-chain actors, and other stakeholders to explore how sustainability goals can be achieved without causing unintended harm to livelihoods or communities. The principles have been shaped through practical experience, discussion, and consultation with a wide range of stakeholders, including fresh produce companies, retailers, NGOs, academics, and other practitioners. The initiative is facilitated by **COLEAD**, supporting dialogue, coordination, and shared learning across participants. The principles are intended to support real-world decisions rather than promote one-size-fits-all solutions.

The Principles



Principle 1

Risk and Opportunity

Does this decision make sense for the business?



Principle 2

Impacts

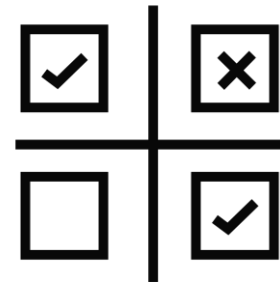
Who and what will be affected by this decision?



Principle 3

Evidence and Engagement

What information do we need, and how do we gather it responsibly?



Principle 4

Proportionality

Do the risks and impacts justify the intended benefit?



Principle 5

Fair Transition

If change is needed, are we making it fair?





Principle 1: Risk and Opportunities

Does this decision make sense for the business?

Decisions should take account of risks and opportunities linked to supply chains, including legal, regulatory, reputational, commercial, and resilience considerations. Where these risks and opportunities are linked to impacts on people, communities or the environment, they should be considered together with Principles 2 to 5.

1.1 Legal and Regulatory Considerations

Consider whether a decision could create legal or regulatory issues, including unfair purchasing or trading practices, misleading or unsupported claims, contractual disputes, liability risks, or failures to meet relevant laws, standards, or duties of care.

1.2 Trust and Reputation

Consider whether a decision could strengthen or weaken trust with customers, suppliers, workers, investors, regulators, or the wider public. Particular attention should be given to how decisions may be perceived by those affected and whether they align with stated commitments and values.

1.3 Resilience and Continuity

Consider how a decision may affect the long-term security, reliability, resilience, and continuity of supply chains. This includes considering dependencies, vulnerabilities, and the potential consequences of reducing sourcing options, suppliers, or regions.

1.4 Commercial Opportunity and Value Creation

Consider whether a proposed action could create opportunities for the business, such as strengthening supplier relationships, supporting innovation, improving resilience, enhancing customer trust, opening new markets, or creating long-term commercial value.

1.5 Practicality and Feasibility

Where alternatives are being considered, these should be realistic in terms of cost, quality, availability, reliability, and practicality. Decisions should take account of whether proposed actions can be implemented effectively and whether the expected benefits are achievable in practice.



Principle 2: Impacts

Who and what will be affected by this decision?

Understanding impacts on people, communities, and the environment is central to fair and responsible supply chain decisions. Impacts should be considered across the whole system, including those that occur indirectly or outside an organisation's immediate sphere of control.

2.1 People and Communities

Consider how a decision may affect jobs, incomes, economic security, health, education, resilience, and access to markets, particularly where people, communities, or businesses have limited alternatives. Consideration should also be given to how impacts are distributed and whether certain groups may be more vulnerable to the consequences of a decision.

2.2 Environmental Impacts

Consider environmental impacts, including emissions, biodiversity, land use, water resources, waste, and other environmental outcomes. Actions intended to improve one environmental issue should not automatically be assumed to deliver an overall environmental benefit.

2.3 Unintended Consequences

Particular attention should be given to unintended consequences and indirect impacts. Consider whether a decision could create new impacts elsewhere in the system, including impacts that fall outside their own operations, reporting boundaries, or emissions inventory. This may include effects on livelihoods, indirect jobs, biodiversity, infrastructure, transport networks, access to essential goods and services, or overall environmental outcomes.

2.4 Distribution of Costs and Benefits

Consider who bears the costs, risks, and burdens associated with a decision and who receives the benefits. New standards, reporting requirements, certifications, sourcing criteria, or other sustainability measures should not create disproportionate burdens for those least able to bear them.

2.5 Fairness and Equity

Particular care should be taken where decisions may disadvantage suppliers, workers or communities in developing countries, especially where resources are more limited and livelihoods are more dependent on trade. Climate-related sourcing decisions should recognise historical responsibility for emissions and avoid placing disproportionate burdens on those who have contributed least to climate change.

Decisions should seek the best overall outcome for people and the environment, while avoiding the transfer of significant negative impacts between places, sustainability issues or stakeholder groups. Where trade-offs cannot be avoided, these should be assessed transparently, with Principle 4 applied to determine whether they are proportionate and whether better alternatives exist.



Principle 3: Evidence and Engagement

What information do we need, and how do we gather it responsibly?

Information should be used to understand both the issue a decision is intended to address and its potential impacts on people, communities, and the environment. The level of information gathered should be proportionate to the importance of the decision.

3.1 Quantitative and Qualitative Evidence

Decisions should be informed by both quantitative and qualitative information. Data and metrics can provide valuable insights, but they should be complemented by engagement, dialogue, research, and local knowledge. The experiences and perspectives of those most likely to be affected by a decision should be considered wherever possible.

3.2 Stakeholder Engagement and Dialogue

Engagement should begin early and should inform what information is gathered and how it is interpreted. Seek to understand the views and experiences of suppliers, workers, communities, and other relevant stakeholders before relying solely on secondary data, assumptions, models, or formal requests for information. Information should be gathered fairly, ethically, and transparently, with stakeholders understanding how information provided may be used.

3.3 Objectivity and Context

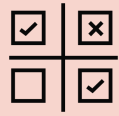
Information should be used objectively and in context. Avoid selectively using data or evidence to support a predetermined position. Where impacts are described as positive or negative, it should be clear what they are being compared against, how conclusions have been reached, and what methods, assumptions, and sources have been used.

3.4 Data Quality and Uncertainty

The quality, reliability and uncertainty of information should be considered. Decisions should not rely disproportionately on data, methodologies or assumptions that are highly uncertain, contested or difficult to verify. Data, methodologies and assumptions developed in one context should not be applied elsewhere without considering whether they accurately reflect local conditions, particularly in developing-country contexts where data availability, production systems and local circumstances may differ significantly. Where significant uncertainty exists, this should be recognised and communicated transparently.

3.5 Proportionate and Responsible Information Requests

Requests for information should be reasonable and proportionate and should avoid placing unnecessary costs or administrative burdens on suppliers and other stakeholders. Organisations should seek to avoid duplicative requests, make effective use of existing information, and be transparent about how information collected will be used.



Principle 4: Proportionality

Do the risks and impacts justify the intended benefit?

Not all decisions require the same level of intervention, investment, or response. Use the evidence available to weigh potential benefits against risks, opportunities, costs, and impacts, considering both the business implications and the effects on people, communities, and the environment.

4.1 Significance of the Issue

The scale of the response should reflect the significance of the issue being addressed. Consider the nature, severity, likelihood, and extent of the risks, opportunities, and impacts identified, together with the strength and quality of the available evidence.

4.2 Justification of the Response

The expected environmental, social, or ethical benefit of a proposed action should be sufficient to justify the risks, costs, burdens, and impacts that may result. Decisions should take account of both direct and indirect consequences, including impacts that may occur elsewhere in the system.

4.3 Identifying Alternatives

Where significant impacts or burdens have been identified, alternative approaches should be considered. Seek solutions that achieve the intended outcome while minimising negative impacts, unintended consequences, and costs to those affected.

4.4 Improvement Before Replacement

Where suppliers face barriers to meeting new requirements, organisations should consider whether support, engagement, capacity building, or phased implementation could achieve the desired outcome before alternative sourcing options are pursued. Maintaining established supplier relationships may, in some circumstances, achieve the intended objective while reducing disruption, preserving livelihoods, strengthening resilience, and avoiding unintended consequences.

4.5 Choosing the Least-Harm Option

Where multiple options are available, preference should be given to approaches that achieve the intended objective while creating the fewest negative impacts and unintended consequences. Organisations should be transparent about the trade-offs involved, explaining what has been prioritised, what risks remain, and why the chosen approach is considered the least harmful and proportionate option.

4.6 Flexibility and Adaptation

Decisions should recognise differences in circumstances, capacities, and levels of risk. Where appropriate, measures should allow for flexibility, phased implementation, adaptation, or differentiated approaches rather than applying a single solution in all situations.



Principle 5: Fair Transition

If change is needed, are we making it fair?

Where decisions may affect jobs, incomes, livelihoods, businesses, or communities, change should be planned and managed together with those affected, not imposed on them. Fair transition is not an add-on, but a core part of responsible decision-making where significant impacts have been identified. This includes situations where a buyer introduces new requirements, substantially reduces volumes, changes sourcing strategy, or exits a supplier relationship.

5.1 Participation and Engagement

Affected suppliers, workers, communities, and other stakeholders should be meaningfully involved in the design and implementation of transition plans. Particular effort should be made to include those who are most vulnerable or most likely to be affected by a decision.

5.2 Transparency and Transition Planning

The reasons for change, the intended outcomes, and the potential risks and impacts should be communicated clearly and transparently. Transition plans should set out responsibilities, timescales, expected impacts, and measures to mitigate negative consequences, informed by engagement with affected stakeholders.

5.3 Time and Capacity to Adapt

People, organisations, and supply chains should be given sufficient time to adapt to new requirements. Where significant changes are proposed, decision-makers should consider whether realistic alternatives, transition periods, or phased implementation approaches are needed to reduce disruption and avoid unnecessary harm.

5.4 Support and Shared Responsibility

The costs and responsibilities associated with transition should be shared fairly across the supply chain. Buyer purchasing practices, pricing, forecasting, lead times, order changes and contract terms should be reviewed to ensure they do not undermine the transition. Where additional requirements create costs or burdens, particular consideration should be given to how smaller suppliers, producers, workers, and vulnerable communities can be supported through funding, training, technical assistance, capacity building, or other appropriate measures. Those with greater resources, influence, or capacity to absorb costs should be prepared to play a greater role in supporting and enabling the transition.

5.5 Fairness in Commercial Relationships

Recognise existing imbalances in power and influence within supply chains. A fair transition requires responsibility from both buyers and suppliers. Organisation's introducing new requirements should consider their own role in supporting implementation and should avoid practices that undermine responsible sourcing outcomes, including unreasonable pricing pressures, excessive risk transfer, late changes, unfair penalties, or sudden withdrawal of business. Where sustainability requirements are introduced, organisations should consider making reciprocal commitments of their own, recognising that responsible sourcing depends on the actions of buyers as well as suppliers.



Fairmiles is an independent multi-stakeholder initiative facilitated by COLEAD, bringing together fresh produce businesses, academia and the international development sector to develop fair, evidence-based and practical pathways towards more sustainable global fresh produce supply chains.

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www.fairmiles.org/principles

